

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JAKART 15539 010914Z

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8015

C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 15539

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, ID

SUBJECT: NEWSWEEK AND INDONESIA

REFS: (A) JAKARTA 15186, (B) STATE 285692

1. DURING MEETING WITH ADMIRAL SUDOMO, HEAD OF KOPKAMTIB, NOVEMBER 30 ON DETAINEE QUESTION, ADMIRAL RAISED RECENT NEWSWEEK ARTICLE. HE SAID INDONESIAN REACTION WAS DUE EXCLUSIVELY TO PARAGRAPH IN ARTICLE OFFENSIVE TO PRESIDENT AND MRS. SUHARTO AND TO FACT THAT SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS MAY HAVE MADE CRITICAL COMMENTS TO NEWSWEEK REPORTER. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE WAS TRUTH IN STORY BUT SAID THAT TONE WAS INSULTING. HE SAID HE WISHED TO ASSURE ME THAT INCIDENT DID NOT IN ANY WAY AFFECT U.S.-INDONESIAN RELATIONS.

2. I REPLIED THAT I HAD BEEN FOLLOWING MATTER AND THAT NATURALLY WE REGRETTED INCIDENT AND RESULTING BAN ON IMPORTANT AMERICAN PUBLICATION. I WAS SURE THAT NEWSWEEK HAD NO MOTIVE OTHER THAN NEWS REPORTING. WE HOPED THAT BAN MIGHT BE LIFTED AND THAT INDONESIA COULD CONTINUE ITS POLICY OF MAXIMUM FREE FLOW OF PUBLICATIONS.

3. SUDOMO SAID HE HAD LAID DOWN TWO CONDITIONS FOR REMOVAL OF BAN: NAMELY, THAT SOME ACTION BE TAKEN AGAINST RICHARD SMITH AND THAT NEWSWEEK APOLOGIZE TO PRESIDENT SUHARTO. NEWSWEEK HAD ALREADY APPROACHED INDONESIAN UN AMBASSADOR SANI AND MATTER WAS UNDER DISCUSSION THROUGH THAT CHANNEL.

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WITH RESPECT TO LOCAL STRINGER, JUDY BIRD WILLIAMS, SUDOMO

SAID SHE WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE INDONESIA IF MATTER WAS NOT
RESOLVED BUT THAT SHE WOULD BE GIVEN SUFFICIENT TIME
COMFORTABLY TO WRAP UP HER AFFAIRS. ON MS. WILLIAMS, I SAID
THAT HER STATUS WAS NATURALLY MATTER FOR INDONESIA BUTA BUT I
DID NOT FEEL SHE HAD HAD MAJOR ROLE IN NEWSWEEK STORY, THAT
SHE HAD BEEN LESS ACTIVE FOR NEWSWEEK IN RECENT MONTHS AND
HAD BEEN IN INDONESIA FOR LONG PERIOD. I HOPED SYMPATHETIC
CONSIDERATION COULD BE GIVEN HER CASE.
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